

***Building Connections...
Tennessee Greenways and
Trails Plan***

***Preliminary Draft
For Public Review
March 20, 2008***

***Greenways and Trails Program
Recreation Educational Services Division
Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation***

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BUILDING CONNECTIONS... TENNESSEE GREENWAYS AND TRAILS

INTRODUCTION

The *2001 Tennessee Greenways and Trails Plan* has successfully guided our state agencies and local governments to develop a system of greenways and trails. This 2001 plan also encouraged planning, development and implementation from the grass roots level utilizing numerous public/private partnerships. Together, we have accomplished many of the policy recommendations in the 2001 Plan. **Now, we are ready to take the next step!**

In the press release, dated November 8, 2007, *Bredesen Celebrates Historic Land Acquisition For Tennessee*, Governor Bredesen summaries this completion of a historic 127,000 acre conservation acquisition on the northern Cumberland Plateau saying, “I believe the best things are accomplished when people with a shared vision work together toward a common goal,” said Bredesen. “We were able to do just that, successfully leveraging our resources to make an investment that will support tourism and the economies of some of our most rural areas, while at the same time ensuring this land is protected for the benefit of Tennesseans for generations into the future.”¹ This statement by Governor Bredesen notes that public-private partnerships are now an essential part of acquiring and developing public land resources and facilities in Tennessee.



Murfreesboro Stones River Greenway Arts Fair

There are numerous opportunities in Tennessee to utilize greenways, trails, rivers and streams in order to spend more time outdoors, to stay healthy, or just to connect with our family, friends and neighbors. From the simple dirt path made by a fisherman walking to the old fishing hole, to the state park trail where a family listens to the park programmer educating them about nature or history; from the hard surfaced bicycle and pedestrian trails that people use for exercise to the Harpeth River paddlers enjoying a leisurely afternoon -- convenient places to walk, hike and bike help people to live healthier lives and build connections, and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation is committed to these goals and the many benefits these opportunities provide.

Rebecca Ruiz stated in her November 26, 2007, Forbes.com article, about “*America’s Most Obese Cities*” that the city of Memphis is ranked No. 1 and Nashville is No.7 on the list of the most sedentary cities in the United States. In 2005, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) ranked Tennessee as 48th in the nation in terms of overall health. More than 62% of the state’s population is overweight or obese and nearly 30% of the state’s population reports no physical activity². Tennesseans can get on the move by using the thousands of miles of trails available across the state – and most are close to home.

Greenways and trails also make our communities more attractive and safe by creating alternative modes of transportation. New transportation programs such as TDOT’s Safe-Routes-To-Schools are providing funds to improve the safety of our children to walk and bicycle to school.³ The program funds both safety education and infrastructure improvements. Other TDOT programs such as the Transportation Enhancements program have provided funding for many bicycle and pedestrian facilities and greenway trails throughout Tennessee.⁴

Greenways help to preserve linear open spaces, protect our streams and help keep the quality of our drinking water safe. Tennessee is blessed with hundreds of miles of streams and rivers as well as numerous impounded reservoirs on both the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers and numerous municipalities take advantage of these water sources. Greenway lands adjacent to streams and reservoirs add a buffer zone to slow down storm water runoff, filter the silt out of the water and help preserve game and non game wildlife habitats. Several recent reports on television have indicated that water is becoming a scarce commodity. The size of the city doesn’t matter -- from Monteagle to Memphis -- protecting surface and sub-surface water sources and conserving water supplies is a high priority for Tennessee.

As the price of houses and land in Tennessee increase every year, federal, state and local governments understand that investments in land, parks and trail systems are becoming critical infrastructure components like new roads, utilities and new schools. Plus, these agencies realize the economic/tourism benefits as well. The Economic Impact of Travel on Tennessee Counties 2006⁵ states in the Executive Summary that the direct impact of domestic and international travel in Tennessee generated the following benefits:

- \$13.4 Billion spent in 2006
- \$5.1 Billion in Payroll Income
- Generated 181,300 jobs in Tennessee
- One job was generated with every \$73, 747 spent in Tennessee
- \$2.8 Billion in direct tax revenue for federal, state and local governments, this was up 5.0% from 2005.

Small communities such as Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge and Sevierville near the Great Smoky Mountains National Park have benefited from the 9 million annual visitors to the National Park for the

past 30 years. More recent efforts, like the Mississippi River Corridor, are inventorying their natural and cultural resources and developing regional efforts (six counties) to promote and market destination travel opportunities.

Just across the Virginia state line is the 35 mile long Virginia Creeper Trail that goes from Abingdon, VA through Damascus and terminates at White Mountain, VA. The U.S. Forest Service did a study in 2005⁶ and found that:

- 150,000 people used the trail in 2003
- Generated \$1.6 million in direct expenditures
- 27 new jobs were created.

Johnson County, Tennessee is now developing a connection to the Virginia Creeper Trail which will one day extend back to Johnson City, Tennessee.

Another major issue in Tennessee is the conversion of forest and farmland into large subdivisions or large commercial retail developments. This suburban growth, or “sprawl” as we all know it, depletes open greenspace by removing all the trees, increases the storm water runoff by paving large areas and increases the cost of local government with the Demand for additional services. Groups like the Cumberland Region Tomorrow have recognized the problems that sprawl causes and have developed a “Quality Growth Toolbox” to help cities and counties understand the need to work regionally on issues like water, sewers and alternative transportation methods and other issues to insure there is economic vitality through quality growth.⁷

Large metropolitan areas like Nashville-Davidson County have developed Strategic Plans for Greenways and Trails along with Sidewalks and Bikeways.⁸ Since 2003, Nashville added or repaired 124 miles of sidewalks, developed 94 miles of bike lanes and created more than 7,000 accessible sidewalk ramps. Nashville currently has 36.5 miles of greenway trails with 14 more miles under development.⁹

The title of the 2008-2010 Action Plan – ***Building Connections...Tennessee Greenways and Trails*** defines the scope of the Plan. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Commissioner’s Council on Greenways and Trails and the staff of the Recreation Educational Services Division will continually strive to address the issues and priorities outlined in this Action Plan. To keep the Plan fluid and timely, TDEC and the Council will evaluate , on an annual basis, the strategies and achievements, and new goals will be developed and implemented.

1 <http://state.tn.us/environment/news/release/2007/Nov/cumberlands.shtml>

2 Center for Disease Control,
<http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/brfss/display.asp?yr=2005&state=TN&qkey=4409&grp=0&SUBMIT3=Go>

3 <http://www.tdot.state.tn.us/bikeped/saferoutes.htm>

4 <http://www.tdot.state.tn.us/local/grants.htm>

5 <http://www.tnvacation.com/industry/research/> study prepared by the Research Department of the Travel Industry Association, Washington, D.C.

6 <http://www.srs.fs.fed.us/trends/present.html>

7 Information taken from <http://www.cumberlandregiontomorrow.org/>

8 http://www.nashville.gov/parks/master_plan.htm ,

http://www.nashville.gov/mpc/sidewalks/finalplan_march03.htm

9 Metro Greenways Commission and Greenways for Nashville newsletter, *greenprint*, Winter 2008, No 14.

Building Connections... Tennessee Greenways and Trails

ACTION PROGRAM 2008-2010

Scope and Purpose

This action program is the result of over 12 months of planning by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (**TDEC**), Recreation Educational Services Division (**RES**) and the Commissioner's Greenways and Trails Advisory Council (**Council**). Council members and RES staff worked throughout 2007 in reviewing accomplishments of the 2001 Tennessee Greenways and Trails Plan, and identifying new or continuing priorities and issues for the Tennessee Greenways and Trails program. The result is an action plan that provides innovative solutions and progressive action through the main theme, ***"Building Connections...Tennessee Greenways and Trails."*** Together, we will all use this document as a guide in establishing and implementing a new, dynamic vision for Tennessee, while continuing to pursue our long-term goal of realizing a statewide system of greenways and trails.

Staff also utilized several citizen involvement methods to gauge users' interests and needs for trails and trail facilities across the state. We received over 650 responses to a Greenways and Trails Survey that was sent out to trail user groups, city and county officials (through the Rural Planning Organizations) and the general public. Numerous local, state and federal agencies were involved in the overall plan development process.

The 2008-2010 Action Program is designed to address current deficiencies, resolutions to critical shortcomings and new approaches to achieving a statewide system of greenways and trails. The key objectives are organized into the following Action categories: Connections: People to Trails...Trails to Community, Health and Safety, Economic Development/Tourism, Alternative Transportation, Natural Resource Conservation & Education, Off Highway Vehicles (Motorized Trails), Educational Outreach and Technical Assistance and Trails for the Future. The last action category is an Implementation Strategy, which outlines methods for accomplishing and evaluating the outcomes of this document.

We have highlighted many innovative strategies and ideas on each page of this Action Program. These examples help to illustrate how existing state policies and programs have benefitted development of greenways and trails. These models also ignite the greenways and trails movement in Tennessee and contribute to making our communities more healthy and livable.

The Greenways and Trails Advisory Council envisions that by realizing the actions included in this document, Tennessee will reap the following impacts/benefits/outcomes:

- Connecting Trails and Greenways statewide will result in creating positive linkages within individual communities
- Tennessee communities will benefit by promoting health and fitness benefits of greenways and trails on a daily basis – thereby adopting active, healthy lifestyles
- Environmentally sustainable economic development using greenways and trails to create connections and provide needed recreational facilities and open space

- An increase in the number of greenway segments and/or trails available to citizens in Tennessee
- Statewide and community partnerships that create a change in our lifestyles -- we are “on the move” and “enjoying our good nature” constantly every day
- Increased organized trail user volunteers who are an important asset to the building and maintenance of our state’s trail system
- Increase each year in the number of events and participants in National Trail Day events/activities in Tennessee which will provide sustained advocacy of Greenways and Trails across the state.
- The creation of stakeholder value and an improved quality of life within our communities with the development of more facilities to encourage walking and bicycle riding to school and workplaces.
- An increase in the number of partnerships between park and recreation departments, the schools and local/state law enforcement agencies; as well as other local, state and federal agencies.
- Tennesseans will experience a transformation, and will know for sure - that an active outdoor lifestyle is a fundamental part of the Tennessean way of life
- A master plan of connecting trails across Tennessee with access for all!

Please join us in building connections in your community to create opportunities to build trails in all 95 counties across Tennessee! The TDEC-RES staff hopes that you will read the guiding principles and key actions, share it with others and start to work improving yourself, your family and your community! *Help us have a greater story to tell when 2011 arrives.*



Hamilton County-Chattanooga South Chickamauga Creek Bridge

CONNECTIONS: PEOPLE TO TRAILS...TRAILS TO COMMUNITY

Guiding Principle: Every community in Tennessee will have access to technical resources and the knowledge necessary to develop their own system of greenways and trails.

Trails promote connections between people, places and parks and are an integral part of building a sense of community among citizens and improving the level of livability. “In the past, recreational trails were typically located outside cities”, says Richard Killingsworth, director of Active Living by Design¹. “This didn't allow them to connect destinations of interest. But now we're entering a new kind of paradigm, looking at how trails can be used as alternative transportation routes located in dense residential areas where they connect people to places they want to go.”²

Tennessee currently has 50 of 95 counties with a hard surfaced greenway trail. Several counties have complete greenway trail systems of 20 miles or more and there are even some multi-county regional systems planned. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC)-Recreation Educational Services Division (RES) will strive to assist in establishing greenways and trails in 65/95 counties by 2011, by adding five new counties with greenways and trails per year. *Ultimately, our vision for Tennessee is to have a trail or greenway planned in every county of the state by the year 2016.*

Actions

1. Encourage development and implementation of comprehensive, county-wide trail plans in Tennessee local government jurisdictions by providing “Planning Grants” through the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) in the 2008 and 2010 grant application process.
2. Provide updated information and technical resources through an interactive website, database and maps of Tennessee’s greenway and trail systems (both hard and natural surfaced).
3. Utilize the comprehensive website and database tools to identify new trail and linkage possibilities. We plan to add 15 new counties to the state-wide database by 2011, bringing our total to 65 counties in Tennessee with greenways and/or trail opportunities.
4. Build awareness statewide and create sustained synergy by implementing Phase I of the **Tennessee Greenway and Trail Branding/Marketing Plan** in 2008-2009. This will be a multi phase project spanning several years that will continue to identify techniques to assist local governments and trail user groups in building a strong grassroots support base for greenways and trails in Tennessee.
 - Phase I includes the development of a Greenways and Trails brand/logo, development of billboard, radio and television advertising, development of brochures and publications that local communities can utilize and the development of a Greenways and Trails information website designed to promote use of greenways and trails by the general public and visitors to Tennessee.
5. Provide a clearinghouse for greenways and trails information statewide. This will include motorized and non-motorized trails on local, state and federally managed lands as well as motorized trails on private lands.
6. Provide trail technical assistance, through the State of Tennessee Greenways and Trails Coordinator, to trail user groups and governmental agencies in the areas of: planning, design, construction and maintenance of all types of trails.

7. Increase information and improve awareness of the importance/use/location of greenways and trails by actively promoting local National Trails Day (NTD) events in Tennessee. TDEC-RES and the Greenways and Trails Advisory Council (GTAC) will partner with local, state and federal agencies and trail user groups to implement one major Tennessee National Trails Day event or activity each year in cooperation with the Governor's office.

Connecting People to Trails Side Bar

In 2007, there were 26 Tennessee events registered on the American Hiking Society's, **National Trails Day** with over 1,000 people participating across the state. TDEC-RES staff, in partnership with the Friends of Beaman Park, Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation, Metro Nashville Parks and Recreation Department and the Tennessee Trails Association, built a 56 feet long by 4 feet wide wood hiking bridge across Henry Creek in Beaman Park. Over 50 volunteers showed up on **National Trails Day** (June 2-3, 2007) to build the bridge. Financial assistance in the form of donations and in kind services were made by Friends of Beaman Park, Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation, Metro Nashville Parks and Recreation Department and the Tennessee Trails Association, along with a generous donation from the Beaman family. **Total cost of the bridge was \$4,000.00 for materials and \$-0- cost for labor.**



Start of the Beaman Park Trail Bridge Project, building the main beams



Extending the Trail Bridge over Henry Creek



Picture of completed Beaman Park Trail Bridge With some of the volunteers who participated.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Guiding Principle: Greenways and trails are tangible ways to increase the health benefits in communities; therefore, government agencies will assume a proactive responsible leadership role as advocates for cost effective regulations which enhance human health.

Trails and greenway advocates and professionals in Tennessee have a prime opportunity to be proactive and address the health and fitness challenges of our citizens through our community facilities – specifically, our numerous greenways and trails.

According to an article by Stuart McDonald for American Trails Magazine, the following challenges exist; First, what makes a trail ideal for exercise? Trail designers need to evaluate and create elements and features that encourage use and at the same time tie other facilities together, such as parks, playgrounds and schools. Second, is to learn from the inactive people, as well as from the active ones. We must help people take those first steps towards activity by showing them what are the benefits. Thirdly, we must reach out and partner with other community agencies and professionals who have that same interest in achieving a healthy community. Hospitals, regional health councils, schools – should always be involved not only in programming activities/events on trails but also in developing and promoting trails.³

State and local agencies have talked and planned for years about the use of greenways and trails, but can we document that more people are walking more miles? Do they live more productive, healthier lives, less dependent on medication? We must engage in using the right methods to measure the positive health outcomes from walking and using trails/greenways.

In **Lenoir City, TN**, the Mayor and City councilmen have mentioned on several occasions that the **Town Creek Greenway** is one of the best additions to their city. Parks and Recreation Director, Steve Harrelson, states that “the number of citizens walking the trail has astounded many of them. Some citizens had no idea when we first started talking about developing a greenway that it would be such a popular addition to our park system. Comments from trail users made us realize that our greenway system has improved the overall fitness of our community and many have commented how they enjoy the natural beauty of our trails and that's what makes them want to get outside and walk.”⁴

Actions

1. Encourage local and state government health departments to partner with parks and recreation departments to promote and educate their citizens about the health benefits derived from developing and using greenways and trails.
2. Develop partnerships with other agencies, for profit and non-profit organizations to increase financial resources and information available to Tennesseans, especially in the areas of health promotion conveyed by the positive impacts of using trails and greenways.
3. Contract with a higher education institution for a study that analyzes safety factors and issues related to crime on community greenways to provide statistics that correlate the decrease in crime that occurs with increased use of local greenway trails.
4. Promote the new Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) helmet law recently passed (2007 SB 1994/HB 1974) by having the information on TDEC's Trails and Greenways website. There were 120 deaths (2003-2006) from the use of 3 and 4 wheeled All Terrain Vehicles

in the state of Tennessee. Nationwide, 29% of these deaths were children under the age of 16 and 12% of these deaths were children under the age of 12.⁵

5. Develop and promote fitness programs for individuals and local/state government agencies such as schools, parks and recreation departments and state parks that utilize Greenways and Trails.

Health and Fitness Side Bar #1

Blue Cross Blue Shield – WalkingWorks Program

Blue Cross and Blue Shield (BCBS), the largest health insurance company in Tennessee, has created a very simple personal health and fitness program based on an activity people do every day and any Tennessean can sign up! The **President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports** recommends 30 minutes per day, or 10,000 steps five or more days per week. It's easy to become a participant, go to: <http://www.bcbs.com/innovations/walkingworks/> to find out more about this exciting program to IMPROVE your health. This program is a collaboration between BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee and the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Health, Tennessee Department of Health and the Tennessee Department of Education.

In 2005, the WalkingWorks for Schools pilot program was introduced to Tennessee schools and 35 schools participated with 13,000 students and 1,045 teachers and administrators starting to walk. This was a collaboration of the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Health, TDOH, TDOE and the Health, Physical Fitness, Recreation and Dance Council. The program was such a success that in the fall of 2006, the program was rolled out statewide at 390 schools engaging 160,000 students. To find out more how your child's school can plug in, go to www.WalkingWorksForSchoolsTN.com.



WalkingWorks for Schools

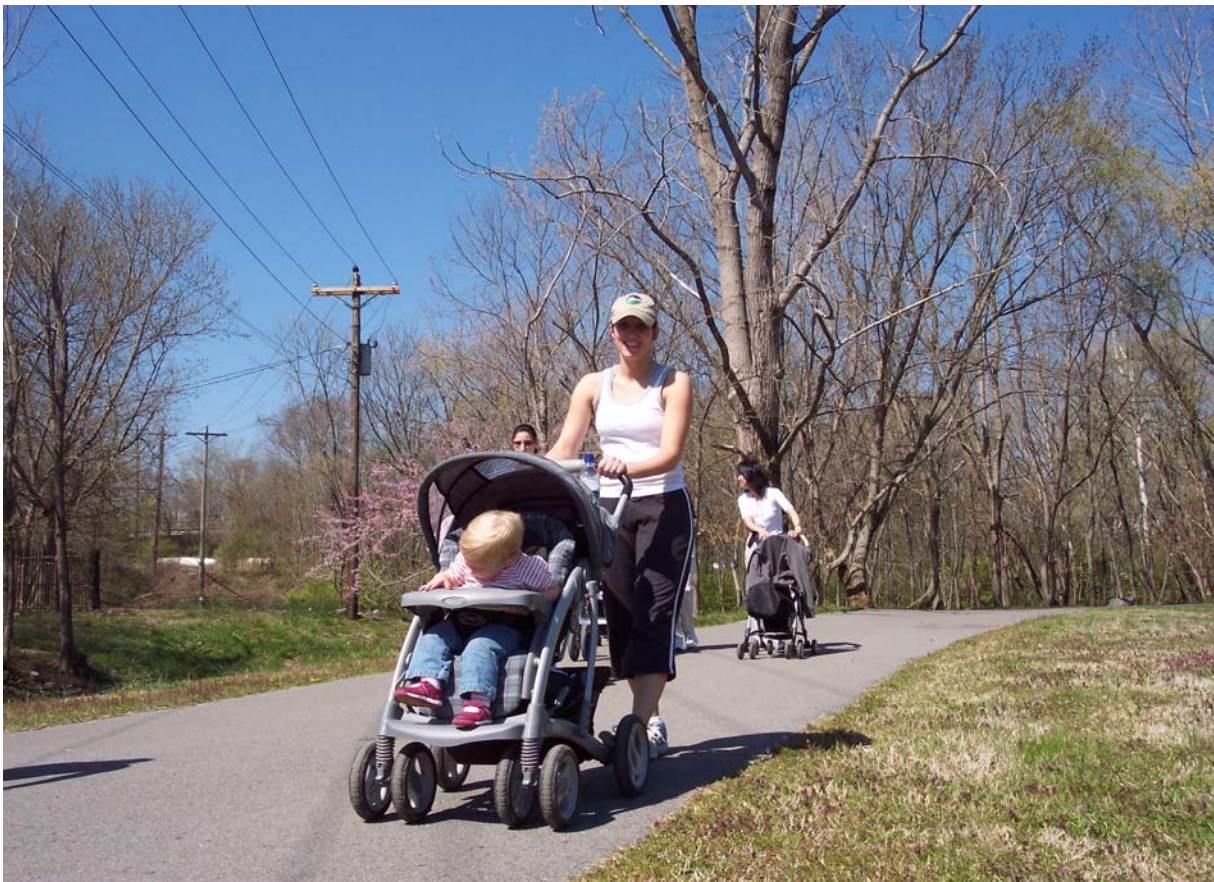


WalkingWorks for Schools

Health and Fitness Side Bar #2

Strollercize

What is Strollercize? It's a great new fitness program developed by the City of Murfreesboro's Greenways Program to get moms and their kids back outdoors, exercising and meeting new people. Walk for fitness while using your child's stroller as portable exercise equipment. For more information call the Greenways Program at 615-893-2141.



Working out on the Murfreesboro Stones River Greenway Trail

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

Guiding Principle: As more people seek outdoor recreation opportunities, we must also educate local governments and other agencies about the economic benefits associated with new and existing trails.

Many national studies demonstrate that parks, greenways and trails increase nearby residential and commercial property values, thus increasing local property tax revenues. These increases in annual local tax revenues will often exceed the initial one time greenway acquisition and development costs.

Chattanooga and Hamilton County are the leaders in combining the development of greenways and trails with the development of new infrastructure and community facilities. These two government agencies have developed strong partnerships with for profit development companies and non-profit organizations in the development of the Tennessee Riverpark Greenway and the redevelopment of the downtown Riverfront.

It all started back in the late 1970's with the passage of the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts in the United States Congress. Chattanooga was a highly industrialized town with a number of heavy industries that were under pressure to meet the new federal standards. A number of these industries chose to close as opposed to spending the required investment to clean up their plants.

With this change becoming apparent, Chattanooga and Hamilton County recognized that a new direction was needed. In 1982, a comprehensive and inclusive master planning effort was initiated by the Moccasin Bend Task Force. Over the course of the next two years, hundreds of community meetings were held with thousands of local citizens participating, the Tennessee Riverpark Master Plan was completed in March 1985 and later presented to an overflow crowd at the then new Chattanooga-Hamilton County Convention and Trade Center.



Chattanooga Downtown Riverfront

Since that time, 10 miles of the Riverpark greenway trail have been constructed on the south side of the river between Chickamauga Dam and the downtown Riverfront. The Riverpark trail crosses the Walnut Street Bridge, renovated and reopened as a bicycle and pedestrian only crossing for the Tennessee Riverpark, and the greenway trail is now being constructed on the north shore of the Tennessee River back to Chickamauga Dam. The Riverpark trail connects neighborhoods with commercial and retail businesses, educational institutions, parks, restaurants and other downtown attractions such as the Tennessee Aquarium and the IMAX Theater. The two Tennessee Aquariums now have more than 1,000,000 visitors annually. Work is continuing to develop greenway trails up the tributaries of the Tennessee River such as South and North Chickamauga creeks.⁶

The Nashville Riverfront Concept is an excellent example of an economic development strategy. This 20 year plan reflects a dramatic transformation of the downtown riverfront and the east banks of the Cumberland River in Nashville. The plan calls for expanded parks, trails, water recreation, and environmental preservation, and provides for both residential and commercial opportunities in the heart of Nashville. This project has value for everyone. It will provide Nashville a world class waterfront and enhances the quality of life for Nashville residents. It can create huge economic development opportunities with the potential to generate over \$1.4 billion in private investment. Environmental clean up of over 190 acres of degraded land, as well as a new place for Nashville residents to recreate and celebrate. The estimated public investment is \$40 million in Phase I, \$200 million in Phase 2 and \$150 million in phase 3. The economic consultants calculate that for every dollar spent of public funds, Nashville gets three to four dollars back in private investment and the project could bring in an additional 1 million visitors per year.⁷



Nashville Riverfront Park

Actions

1. The Commissioner of TDEC will make additional agency appointments to the Greenways and Trails Advisory Council to include representation from the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development (TDECD).
2. Complete the statewide GIS Trail Inventory and Map. TDEC-RES should then use this map to work with the TDECD to identify areas of the state that are economically depressed to target greenway and trail tourism and revitalization opportunities.
3. Encourage TDECD to include in their grant programs the inclusion of trails, including industrial park developments and community revitalization efforts. These are key economic development indicators in an active, vibrant community!
4. Direct and facilitate important greenway and trail studies for Tennessee. The results of these studies will help guide the state when making decisions in many of these key areas of the Action Program.
 - a) First, conduct a scientific random sample survey in Tennessee with a comprehensive set of questions concerning greenways and trails.
 - b) Secondly, work with higher education institutions and the Tennessee Department of Tourism Development (TDTD) to cooperatively fund an Economic Benefits study of greenways and trail in several communities in Tennessee.

Economic Development & Tourism Side Bar #1

CITY of GATLINBURG – Greenways and Trails Investments

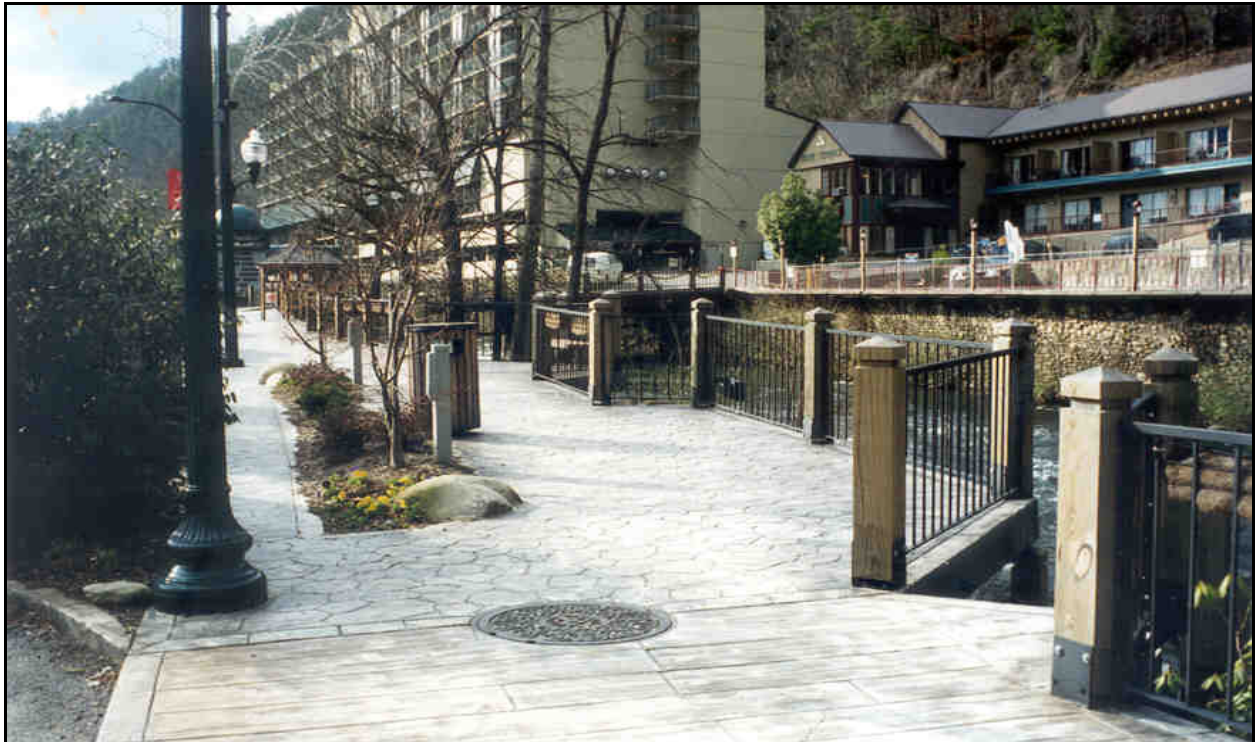
In late 1993, the City was awarded an ISTEA Transportation Enhancement grant for \$180,000 and the overall project budget for Phase I of the Riverwalk was \$225,000. The firm Barge, Waggoner, Sumner and Cannon was hired to do the design and construction management for the project. After review of the grant, the project was determined to not be feasible as designed. After a redesign the new concept plan was presented to several groups within the city and enthusiasm began to build. The redesign included putting the utilities underground and cantilevering the sidewalks over the river when possible. Costs for the project had increased dramatically and community leaders knew something dramatic had to happen to gain political support.

A private fundraising drive was spearheaded by Mr. Jim Gerding was very successful and raised \$560,000 in pledges. The City Commission voted unanimously to proceed with Phase I of the Riverwalk at an estimated cost of \$1.8 million. Construction of Phase I began in December, 1996 and was completed on time and in budget in May, 1997.

In 1998, Ripley's Entertainment announced their intent to build a \$40 million aquarium in Sevier County. Multiple sites in the County were under consideration and due to the recent construction of Phase I, Ripley's chose Gatlinburg. One condition was that Phase II must be built. Public investment included Phase II and two new parking garages, a transit center at the Aquarium and a Visitor's Center at one parking garage. Total public and private investment approached \$60 million at the end of Phase II.⁸



Impacts of the 1993 city of Gatlinburg Flood



City of Gatlinburg Riverwalk Phase I completed

Economic Development & Tourism Side Bar #2

Germantown Leverages Greenway Development

The City of Germantown is a leader in achieving local greenway and trail objectives. Germantown city leaders have passed an aggressive parkland dedication ordinance and developed a local area greenway master plan. These initiatives require developers, when beginning a new construction project, to build the section of trail (at the developer's expense) that has been planned for greenway development or dedicate funds toward a park or greenway development in another area of the community if a portion of trail is not designated for their property. The result is a growing system of greenways and a remarkable achievement – Germantown now has a park or trail within ½ mile of every citizen in the city. In a growing community like Germantown, this foresight on behalf of community leaders has made Germantown a leader in Tennessee greenway and trail development, helping them achieve national recognition.



Germantown Trailhead for Wolf River Trail

ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION

Guiding Principle: Greenways and trails should be used more often as alternative transportation modes -- they promote energy conservation, improved air and water quality, reduction of noise pollution and safe bicycle/pedestrian corridors.

The most exciting and viable places to live are the communities where walking and biking take place every day. The people that live in these communities take great interest in their personal fitness, improved air quality, and safe paths for children to go to school, not to mention the savings from gasoline expenses.

Greenway trails are more than a trail in a park. The focus of Building Connections... Tennessee Greenways and Trails is to stress the importance of making those trail connections within the community, and when possible, to other nearby communities. Develop the local area plan and then assess the different components and possible funding sources for each. Communities must remember that planning and design of their greenway trails for transportation purposes requires more technical specifications than trails with a primary function of recreation.

The City of Knoxville has promoted alternative transportation since the early 1970's with the development of the Third Creek Greenway Trail that connected the married student apartments to the University of Tennessee campus. Since that time, there are 16 miles of connected trails and **over 40 miles total of greenway trails** now exist and are used by walkers, runners and bicyclists to make their way to work, school, shopping or visit the parks⁹.

TDEC must maximize cooperation with our partners, specifically TDOT and TECD, and even work internally within our own department to ensure that significant action continues and that new programs are implemented.

Actions

1. The Transportation Enhancements (TE) program is a key funding source for pedestrian and bicycle paths within TDOT. TDEC and TDOT should continue working together in partnership with local governments to promote the TE program.
2. The Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) program is a key program within TDOT to improve child safety when walking and bicycling to school. TDEC and TDOT should continue working together in partnership with local governments to promote the Safe Routes Program.
3. Include the Tennessee Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) and Rural Planning Organization (RPO) as members of the Greenways and Trails Roundtable to provide information and increase their understanding and knowledge of Greenways and Trails.
4. Provide technical assistance to communities on Greenways and Trails Systems planning and encourage local governments to apply for Transportation Enhancement Program grants to develop interconnecting trail systems.
5. Partner with the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development and the Development Districts to add greenway and trail planning as an important component of any future local government planning efforts.

Alternative Transportation Side Bar

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) has an important role in creating hard surfaced bicycle and pedestrian trails with their Transportation Enhancements (TE) grant program. The TE program has an annual grant cycle and there is approximately \$15 million available to government agencies for grants in several categories. The TE grants are 80% federal funding and 20% local matching funds.

The Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) Program is a new program created under the 2005 Safe, Accountable Transportation Efficiency Act – a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). The SRTS provides 100% grant funding to local school boards and city/county governments to develop safety education and infrastructure projects within a two mile radius of K-8 schools. Contact Diana Benedict, 615-253-2421 or Diana.benedict@state.tn.us for more information on the SRTS program.

The City of Nolensville worked in cooperation with the Williamson County School System making its Safe Route to School grant application. This partnership was successful and the City of Nolensville received a grant for \$250,000 to create a system of sidewalks from old and new subdivisions to the Nolensville Elementary School. The City is already implementing some of the safety programs such as the walking school bus. The pictures below show the opportunities that any community can do when the city, the school system, the parents and the students work cooperatively. Contact Mayor Beth Lothers at 615-776-6680 or mayorbethlothers@comcast.net.



City of Nolensville Walking School Bus day



City of Nolensville Walking School Bus day

NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION & EDUCATION

Guiding Principle: The use of greenways and trails provides opportunities for all Tennesseans to be outdoors and these inherent benefits should be infused into nature-based education offerings.

There are numerous ways to improve the opportunities for conservation education and the protection of Tennessee's natural and cultural resources. The state's Greenways and Trails program promotes and supports the establishment of healthy remedies and helpful solutions to the current societal shift away from outdoor education and outdoor recreation. This Action Program pays special attention to initiatives that connect people with nature including the awareness of using Tennessee's water trails (also known as blueways).

Tennessee State Parks staff took the lead in establishing a statewide program for children in cooperation with many government, non-government and corporate partners. The launching of *Tennessee Children Enjoying Our Good Nature One Step at a Time* incorporates the mission of state parks "to preserve and protect, in perpetuity, unique examples of natural, cultural, and scenic areas and provide a variety of safe, quality, outdoor experiences through a well-planned and professionally managed system of state parks."

There are spectacular water resources available in Tennessee that provide quality outdoor experiences and are a great way to bring people back to nature. The Greenways and Trails Advisory Council (GTAC) states it is also important to emphasize the role of water trails in protecting the quality of life in our communities. It is a natural tie to conservation and conservation education.

In the six years from 1999 to 2003, the National Resources Inventory states that Tennessee has lost 245,800 acres from farm or forest lands to development. This is an average of 41,000 acres annually and the growth rate for middle Tennessee counties are some of the highest in the nation. Nashville is starting to blend into one large urban area as you go south down the I-24 corridor towards Murfreesboro with LaVergne and Smyrna expanding both towards Nashville and Murfreesboro.

Tennessee's population reached 6,000,000 in 2006¹⁰ and more people and businesses are moving to Tennessee each month. This movement is putting increased pressure and demand on Tennessee's natural and cultural resources. We need to address the disconnect between people and nature by giving them opportunities to get back into the natural environment close to home!

From the thousands of miles of streams and rivers, to the dozens of reservoirs that are used as means of transportation and recreation; from the mountains of East Tennessee to the meandering rivers and snowy fields white with cotton in West Tennessee, the legacy of Tennessee's land and water conservation efforts shapes what Tennessee will become in the future.

The Tennessee greenways and trails system – throughout our federal and state parks and forests, local government parks and recreation agencies, private for profit and non-profit organizations – strives to provide these critical outdoor experiences to children and adults alike.

Actions

1. Develop a statewide initiative to connect Tennesseans with Nature/Conservation. The focus would be on children and families because the current nation-wide initiative is meant to re-connect children with nature.
 - a) Work with Project CENTS to initiate a pilot program within a county to assist parents and educators in increasing time spent outdoors by children of all ages.

- b) Incorporate greenway and trails activities into the new, upcoming statewide initiative – “Tennessee Children - Enjoying Our Good Nature One Step at a Time.”
 - c) The TDEC staff and Council will actively participate in The Children & Nature Network (C&NN), which was created to encourage and support the people and organizations working to reconnect children with nature. C&NN provides access to the latest news and research in the field and a peer-to-peer network of researchers and individuals, educators and organizations dedicated to children's health and well-being.
- 2. Enable the expansion of conservation education for all PreK-12 students by incorporating greenways and trails activity curricula into Project CENTS for use by local parks and recreation departments, state parks, and schools.
- 3. Promote the conservation of native plants or the restoration of native plants along greenway corridors in an attempt to re-establish suitable wildlife habitat and eliminate invasive, exotic plant communities. The Division of Natural Areas within TDEC should partner with local government and non-profit organizations to develop Best Management Practices (BMP'S) to remove exotic invasive plants.
- 4. TDEC and TWRA should work together to promote the expansion of blueways and blueway education, as well as developing new river access sites, campsites and other water based facilities.
 - a) The Council should identify one educational priority for blueways and/or water resource issues and work with governmental and non-governmental partners to develop specific materials/media such as the Harpeth River video.¹¹
 - b) Incorporate water resource issues and priorities for blueway development into the TDEC grant selection process for local governments.

Natural Resource Conservation & Education Side Bar #1

Project CENTS (Conservation Education Now for Tennessee Students) was reignited as a joint project of TDEC and the Tennessee Department of Education in 2005. Since that time, Project CENTS has been working to enhance the scope and quality of environmental education in Tennessee by

- Training teachers in quality environmental education materials
- Introducing teachers to the TP3 Green Schools Program
- Working with teachers to cross reference academic curriculum with Project CENTS materials and Green Schools activities in an effort to increase environmental literacy
- Encouraging the creation and use of outdoor classrooms by offering 'how to' information and seed grants for educators
- Organizing and launching the website www.eeintennessee.org which functions as a clearinghouse of environmental education resources and activities in Tennessee

On April 25, 2008 Project CENTS, the Tennessee Environmental Education Association (TEEA) and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency will host the Tennessee Outdoor Classroom Symposium. This event will bring educators, parents and resource professionals together for a day of sharing ideas on creating, maintaining and using outdoor learning areas on school grounds.



Project CENTS 2008 Training Workshop

Natural Resource Conservation & Education Side Bar #2

Water, Water Everywhere, but Where Can I Get On?

Tennessee is blessed with an abundance of scenic, historic, and alluring waterways, offering great opportunity for experiencing nature close up and personal from a canoe or kayak. But not knowing exactly where safe and legal public access exists can at times discourage would-be paddlers.

Enter: “**Blueways.**” Also known as water trails, blueways—a spin-off the term “greenway”—are designated paths on water for which put-ins, take-outs, and various points of interest have been pre-identified. In essence, via brochures, maps, and websites, blueways provide essential information making waterways more accessible to non-motorized users.

Several blueways currently exist in Tennessee. These include the French Broad Blueway linking Asheville to Knoxville via the French Broad River, and the Tennessee River Blueway for which an initial 50-mile section near Chattanooga was first designated in 2002. It is anticipated that more of the Tennessee River and its tributaries will be developed as blueways in the future, making our state’s waterways more accessible to future generations of paddlers.

For more information, contact Dr. Jeff Duncan of the National Park Service, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance branch at (423)266-1150 or jeff_duncan@nps.gov.



**Chattanooga’s Coolidge Park Grand Opening
Tennessee River Access Area**



Tennessee River Boat Ramp and rest spot

OFF HIGHWAY VEHICLES (MOTORIZED) TRAILS

Guiding Principle: The State of Tennessee should continue to work with agencies, communities and organizations to provide trails and greenways for user types with significant unmet needs.

The need to address motorized recreation is real in Tennessee. (*cite from 2001 Tennessee Greenways and Trails Plan, page 44*) More motorized dirt bikes, all terrain vehicles (ATV's) and 4 x 4-wheel drive vehicles are sold each year and yet there are no new trails. The United States Forest Service has completed research on trail design techniques that can produce low maintenance, sustainable OHV trails.

The 2002 State of Tennessee Governor's Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) Study¹² presented a high need for permanent, publicly owned OHV recreation areas which are located regionally so the OHV trail users can drive 1-2 hours to reach an OHV park. This study also emphasized that the estimated direct economic impact was \$1.76 billion, with the total for both direct and indirect impacts being \$3.43 billion (1998 prices). OHV recreation in Tennessee generates a large amount of tax revenues for local and state government through state gas taxes; state and local sales taxes and other permit and use fees. It is a big business in Tennessee.

The state legislature passed the 2004 Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Act which establishes an OHV program in the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency; however, it does not have a dedicated funding mechanism, such as an annual title fee or an annual user permit fee. TWRA oversees the OHV pilot program at Royal Blue Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and there are now over 30 miles of rehabilitated trails OHV trails for dirt bikes, ATV's and 4x4's. These initial trails at RBWMA have been signed and marked and a map is available at

Actions

1. Create an equitable state funding mechanism to finance public land acquisition and trail development for Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) trails, focusing on a regional approach and involving local government entities, OHV users and public/private partnerships.
2. TDEC will develop an inventory of all OHV trails (public and private) and place the information on the Greenways and Trails web page.
3. The Greenways and Trails Roundtable group should discuss and propose solutions to address Tennessee's OHV program based on a policy statement developed by all land management agencies and statewide OHV trail advocates
 - a. This group should also review the TCA and the 2002 TDEC OHV Feasibility Study to clarify needed strategies or direction
 - b. Discuss the feasibility and development steps for a Grant-in-Aid program targeting construction and operation of OHV trail systems by local governments to increase the number of OHV trails and promote local area economic benefits.
 - c. Plan an OHV forum to continue the dialogue and address solutions among cooperating agencies
 - d. Advocate the development of best management practices (BMPs) and environmentally sound construction designs suitable in Tennessee.

Off Highway Vehicles (Motorized) Trails Side Bar

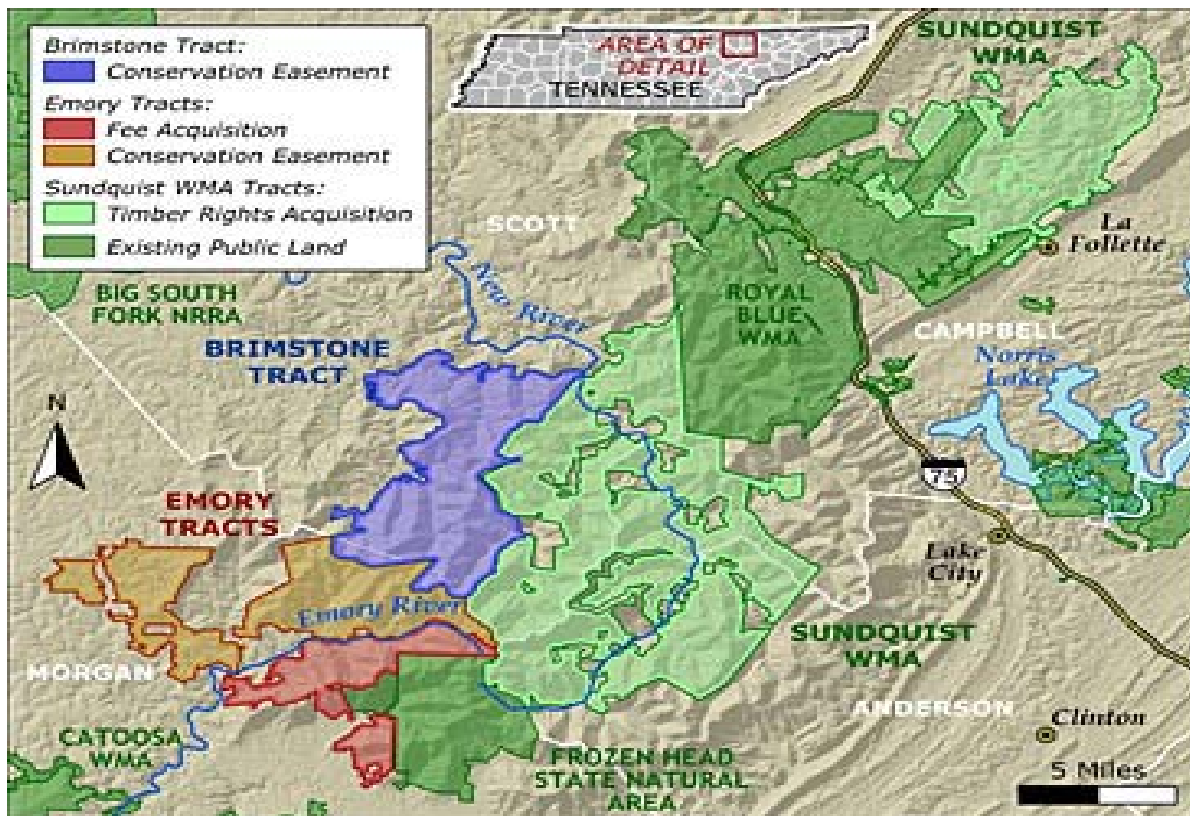
One of the premier OHV areas in the eastern United States is the Hatfield-McCoy Trail System in West Virginia. Ten years in the making, legislation was passed in 1996 creating the Hatfield McCoy Regional Recreation Authority and included a seven county region in southern West Virginia. In 2007, this number increased to nine counties with six communities passing local ordinances to allow OHV use on local roads and thoroughfares. There are now approximately 1,000 miles of interconnected trails in the 9-county region.

The Center for Business and Economic Research Department of Marshall University in Huntington, WV, conducted an Economic Impact Study for the calendar year, 2005,¹³ of the Hatfield McCoy Trail. They highlighted the following results:

- 24,285 trail users purchased permits;
- Trail users spent \$2,798,036 in local communities;
- 146 Full Time jobs were created

These activities had a direct impact of \$ 622,752 in state tax revenues. For more information on the Hatfield McCoy project, go to www.trailsheaven.com.

This type of system is slowly being created in the Campbell, Scott, Morgan and Anderson counties of Tennessee. The North Cumberland Purchase added over 122,000 acres of lands in Campbell, Scott, Morgan and Anderson Counties and these lands are contiguous to the Sundquist and Royal Blue Wildlife Management Areas (WMA). The private company, Brimstone Recreation, LLC manages and promotes the recreational use of 19,196 acres of land in Scott county, will be working with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency to continue to manage this area for recreation activities.



3-18-08 revision

North Cumberland Conservation Acquisition (127,000 acres)

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Guiding Principle: TDEC-RES believes that if Tennesseans have access to a broad range of educational opportunities they will embrace the importance of greenways and trails to community health and well-being. They will build more trails, use more trails and connect more trails.

One of the most effective actions the State of Tennessee has taken to assure the future of Tennessee's greenways and trails is to provide education and technical assistance. In order for local communities and other state/federal organizations to succeed in building trails, the state will continue improving the support structure, resources and methods of outreach in order to direct sustainable planning and development.

The Greenways and Trails Advisory Council believes that education and promotion of trails initiatives should be a priority for the next three years. With their guidance, the state will focus on using creative partnerships and seeking out all funding sources available to develop the most effective programs and resources. We will see the citizens of Tennessee become more involved in our efforts because they will be leading plans and projects in their own communities!

Actions

1. The state greenways and trails program will be the focal point for education and public information dissemination relating to trail/greenway resources, by focusing outreach efforts, educational seminars and distribution of informational resources to local governments and other non-profit organizations. Cooperative efforts with Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, the Development Districts, Tennessee Municipal League, Tennessee County Services Association, and Convention & Visitors Bureaus will make this happen.
 - a. Create a "Backpack" (tool kit) that would provide educational materials and resources for grants/funding sources, Pathways to Trail Building publication (trail design and construction guidelines for all types of non-motorized trails), healthy programs and marketing tools and promotion of events.
2. TDEC and the Council will play an integral role in planning the 2010 National Trails Symposium in Chattanooga, TN – by serving on committees, establishing special events, identifying potential sponsors and coordinating educational sessions and off site workshops.
3. Develop a mobile workshop using a statewide-team approach. TDEC-RES will increase the knowledge of community leaders and staff by conducting 3 or 4 one-day technical seminars across the state.
4. TDEC-RES has resources available such as the "*Pathways to Trail Building*" booklet which focuses on the design and construction of non-motorized trails. Go to: <http://state.tn.us/environment/recreation/greentrails.shtml> to either request a 5.5" x 11" two color copy or a 8.5" x 11" four color copy you can download.

Educational Outreach & Technical Assistance Side Bar

CUMBERLAND TRAIL CONFERENCE

The Cumberland Trail Conference (CTC) works in partnership with the Tennessee State Parks in the trail construction and maintenance of the 300 mile Cumberland Trail State Scenic Trail. The CTC has several training opportunities for volunteers each year as a component of their trail building projects. **Breakaway** is the early spring (Feb-March) construction period that in 2008 is partnering with 17 colleges and universities. Each week brings new groups of volunteers that hike into the job site, get sweaty, dirty, rained on and muddy, BUT love every minute and are incredibly proud of what they have accomplished.

Other volunteer activities happen throughout the year like the **Big Dig** (May-June) and other trail maintenance workdays in the summer and fall. For more information, go to <http://www.cumberlandtrail.org/>. The CTC needs more volunteers to continue the work of constructing and maintaining the Cumberland Trail. How about you?



2007 Breakaway Trail Crew

TRAILS FOR THE FUTURE

Guiding Principle: **Be proactive in planning and funding greenway and trail infrastructure throughout the State of Tennessee and establishing linkages with neighboring communities.**

Citizen involvement, when combined with local leadership, can be the most important catalyst in planning and developing a system of greenways and trails for the future. But also important, are the dedicated funding sources that are available to local governments and other agencies and organizations. TDEC-RES encourages facilitating citizen involvement in trail planning, construction and maintenance, but we also need that same citizen activism to ensure funding for future trails programs.

The Butler Street section of Riverwalk in Pigeon Forge, TN was a tremendous improvement to the neighborhood. John Wilbanks, Parks and Recreation Director, states, “Before we put the trail in there were no walks, street lights, or proper drainage. Once the trail was completed, the walk, lights and drainage improved the look and quality of life for Butler Street residents. The residents actually spend time outside visiting with each other as they use the trail. The residents have continually expressed their pleasure with the improvements and how it has helped the look and quality of their neighborhood.”

The State of Tennessee strongly supports efforts for public acquisition of open space for greenways and trails through the *State Lands Acquisition Fund*, *Local Parks and Recreation Fund* and the *Heritage Conservation Trust Fund*. Governor Bredesen has also made special appropriations of \$20 million for acquiring Bowaters Company lands and \$82 million for the historic North Cumberland land acquisition.

TDEC-RES administers one federal funded source dedicated for the acquisition of land for trails, planning and construction of trails and trail head facilities. The ***Recreational Trails Program (RTP)*** through the Federal Highway Administration provides a total of \$370 million nationwide from Fiscal Year (FY) 2005 through FY 2010. Current FY 2007 annual allocation for Tennessee is approximately \$1,250,000. The funds for the RTP come from the federal gasoline taxes paid by OHV trail users. The RTP develops new non-motorized and motorized trails and maintains trails for recreational purposes that include pedestrian, equestrian, bicycling as well as off-road motorized vehicle activities. This program also funds trail safety and education grants and RTP administration.

Actions

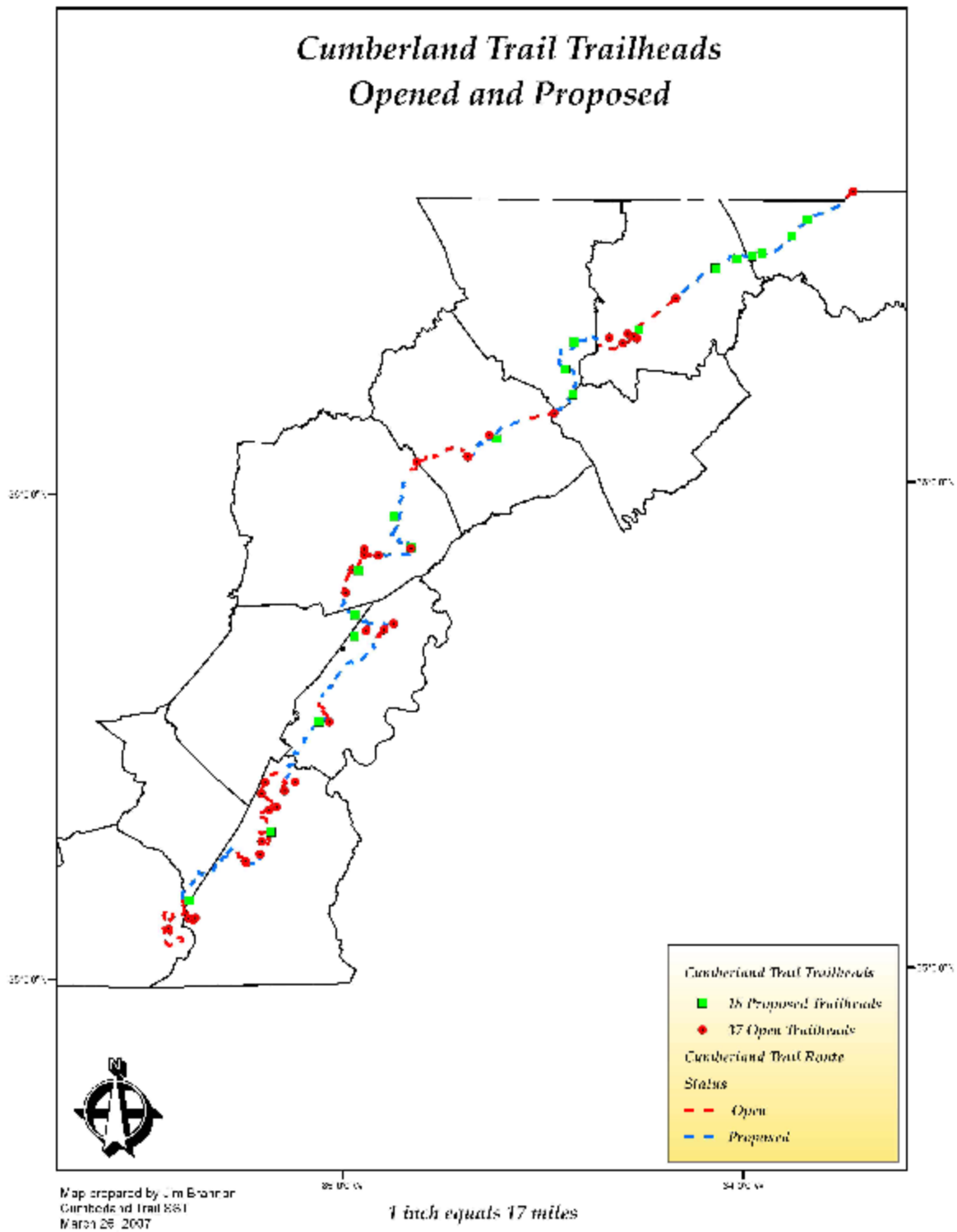
1. Develop the interactive statewide Greenways and Trails GIS Map on the TDEC-RES web site – make it useable and accessible to both professionals in the field and citizens/trails users.
2. TDEC-RES should focus funding priorities in the areas deemed most important in this Action Program:
 - a) The 2007 Greenways and Trails Survey revealed a high priority by all trail users for new and improved support facilities and trailhead facilities. In order to put a focus on this area, TDEC-RES should either concentrate a

- round of RTP grant funding on these type projects or give application bonus points for construction and rehabilitation of these types of facilities.
- b) TDEC-RES should also concentrate RTP grant funding or give bonus points on applications that apply for greenways and trails where none currently exist.
3. The Greenways and Trails Roundtable group should discuss and propose solutions to address *creative funding solutions for trails* and to establish a new dedicated state funding mechanism for trails, greenways and open space. One example to consider might be for TDEC-RES to provide small grants to communities for the development and promotion of marketing materials for the local trail systems.
 4. Provide more technical assistance resources to local governments in order to encourage and promote statewide connectivity. Examples include: GIS maps, technical assistance planning kits, trailhead facility specifications and standards available on web site, etc.
 5. The Cumberland Trail is a nationally significant project in Tennessee. Continue to build awareness and encourage its use, future funding and completion. Develop “Gateway Communities” along the Cumberland Trail and emphasize and support the benefits to the local communities.

Trails for the Future Side Bar

The Cumberland Trail (CT) was designated as a Tennessee State Scenic Trail in the 1971 Tennessee Trails Act, and became Tennessee's 53rd state park in 1998. This State Scenic Trail is probably one of the biggest examples of what continuous volunteer involvement/support, combined with multiple funding sources, can produce. The Justin P. Wilson Cumberland Trail State Park will contain a core corridor of 300-plus miles of trail beginning in the Cumberland Gap National Historic Park (TN/KY/VA tri state corner) and stretches south on the tops of the Cumberland Mountain and then on the eastern edge of the Cumberland Plateau. The southern terminus is at Signal Point Park a component of the Chickamauga Chattanooga National Military Park near Chattanooga, Tennessee.

The Cumberland Trail State Scenic Trail(CTSST) connects numerous state parks and natural areas together as well as other state managed lands and National Park Service units. In addition to providing positive economic benefits to the local communities it passes through, the CTSST provides multiple recreational opportunities, and this protected greenway will act as a buffer to protect water quality, provide habitat for animals and plants and will be a functioning wildlife corridor across Tennessee.





Cumberland Trail State Scenic Trail marker

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Guiding Principle: TDEC-RES and the Commissioner's Greenways and Trails Advisory Council will seek input and promote partnerships between all levels of government, for profit and non-profit organizations, communities and other key stakeholders to focus on innovative solutions to common problems and concerns, and to foster development and promotion of greenways and trails.

Actions

1. The Commissioner's Greenways and Trails Advisory Council, in cooperation with TDEC-RES staff, will annually evaluate the effectiveness of objectives/ actions as outlined in this document, **Building Connections...Tennessee Greenways and Trails – Action Program 2008.**
2. Convene a statewide Greenways and Trails Roundtable (to work on specific action items, research, advocacy, best management practices) and to help identify successful ways to increase intergovernmental cooperation, and improve relationships with non-profit organizations.

- 1 A program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association
- 2 Happy Trails, by Ross Atkin, <http://www.americantrails.org/>
- 3 quote taken from www.americantrails.org web site
- 4 discussion with RES staff
- 5 Streeter, Robin A., Ph.D., M.P.H.; Directorate of Epidemiology, Division of Hazard Analysis, U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, D.C. 20207, 2006 Annual Report of ATV-Related Deaths and Injuries; February,2008; <http://www.cpsc.gov> .
- 6 Source: <http://www.hamiltontn.gov/riverpark/Default.aspx>
- 7 Source: <http://www.nashville.gov/parks/riverfront/>
- 8 Power Point presentation by Steve Fritts, Barge, Wagoner, Sumner and Cannon, at 2007 TRPA Annual Conference in Gatlinburg, TN
- 9 Knoxville's greenway system grows, Brittany Bailey, WBIR.Com, at <http://www.wbitr.com/printfullstory.aspx?storyid+55133>
- 10 Division of Health Statistics, Office of Policy, Planning and Assessment, Tennessee Department of Health
- 11 <http://www.tennessean.com/includes/publicus/INTERACTIVES/harpeth/harpeth.shtml>
- 12 Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Recreation Educational Services Division website, Item 4, number 2, <http://state.tn.us/environment/recreation/plan/> .
- 13 Hatfield McCoy Trail System Economic Impact Study for 2005, Marshall University, Charleston, WV.